

THE SCIENTIFIC NAME OF THE ALFALFA WEEVIL (COLEOPTERA: CURCULIONIDAE)

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Since 1823 the generic names *Phytonomus* Schoenherr and *Hypera* Germar have been widely used for the clover and alfalfa weevils, though not always in the same sense. The following facts are presented at this time as a possible aid toward restoring nomenclatural stability to an economically important group of weevils. The principal questions are whether *Phytonomus* or *Hypera* is the correct generic name for the clover and alfalfa weevils, and whether *variabilis* Herbst or *postica* Gyllenhal is the correct specific name for the alfalfa weevil. All four combinations of these generic and specific names have been used at one time or another for the alfalfa weevil.

THE GENERIC NAME

The nomenclatural histories of *Hypera* and *Phytonomus* may be condensed as follows:

1817, Germar, *Magazin der Ent.*, Vol. 2, p. 340, establishes *Hypera*, not by a morphological description, but by including the following: "*Hypera* nob. *Rhynch. nigrirostris*, *scanicus*, *Curculio Polygoni*, *punctatus*, *Arun- dinis*."

1819, Leach, in Samouelle, *The Entomologist's Useful Compendium*, p. 205, lists several recently established genera and says, "the species mentioned may be considered the type." Under *Hypera* Germar he lists "sp. 1 *Cur. nigrirostris*," which undoubtedly is *nigrirostris* Fabricius (1775, *Syst. Ent.*, p. 132).

1823, Schoenherr, *Isis von Oken*, Heft 10, establishes *Phytonomus*, but not by a morphological description. In column 1133 Schoenherr explains that he changed certain feminine generic names and changes *Hypera* to *Phytonomus*. Schoenherr did not designate a type-species for *Phytonomus* at this place in his paper, but later in this same paper (column 1143) he formally proposes the name as follows: "120 *Phytonomus* nob. *Hypera* Germ., Dej., Typ. *Rhynchaen. Polygoni* Fabr."

1826, Schoenherr, *Curc. Disp. Meth.*, pp. v-vi, states that he had given masculine names to the genera of Curculionidae. On page 14 he repeats his 1823 designation of *polygoni* as type-species as follows: "Genus 94 *Phytonomus* nob. (*Hypera* Germ.) Typus: *Rhynch. Polygoni* auct."

Several brief discussions of Schoenherr's practice of substituting masculine names for feminine names have appeared in *Petites Nouvelles Entomologique*, Volume 2, 1876, by Rouget, p. 73, by Girard, p. 78, by Tournier, p. 79, and by Rouget, p. 83. Marshall in 1913 (*Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Ser. 8, Vol. 11, p. 225) pointed out that *Phytonomus* was invalid. In spite of these clearly stated rejections, the name *Phytonomus* has continued in

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rather common use to the present time. Even Petri in his admirable monograph of the group (1901, Siebenburg Ver. Naturwiss. Hermanstadt.), Titus (1911, Ann. Ent. Soc. America, Vol. 4), and Zaslaskij (1961, Revue d'Entomologie de l'URSS. Vol. 40) have used *Phytonomus*.

Some authors have argued that *Phytonomus* has a different type-species than *Hypera* because of the designation of *polygoni* by Schoenherr in 1823. But the new International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, 1961, p. 65, Article 67(i) says, "Replacement names.—If a zoologist proposes a new generic name expressly as a replacement for a prior name, both nominal genera must have the same type-species, and, subject to (i) below, type-fixation for either applies also to the other, despite any statement to the contrary." (The statement, "subject to (i) below," does not apply here.) Therefore, the type-species of *Phytonomus* is automatically the same as the type species of *Hypera*, which is *Curculio nigrirostris* Fabricius, according to Leach, 1819. *Rhynchaenus polygoni* cannot be the type-species of *Phytonomus*, despite Schoenherr's designation. Thus, *Hypera* and *Phytonomus* are absolute synonyms, because they have the same type-species. *Phytonomus*, therefore, can never be used as a valid generic name.

THE SPECIFIC NAME

The early names that were proposed for the alfalfa weevil are:

- 1784 *Curculio haemhorroidalis* [*sic*] Herbst, in Fuessly's Arch. Ins. Gesch., Heft 5, p. 78, preoccupied by *Curculio haemorrhoidalis* Fabricius, 1775, Syst. Ent., p. 140.
- 1795 *Curculio variabilis* Herbst, Natursys. Ins., Vol. 6, p. 263, preoccupied by *Curculio variabilis* Fabricius, 1776, Gen. Insectorum, Mantissa specierum, p. 224.
- 1802 *Curculio bimaculatus* Marsham, Coleop. Brit., p. 266, preoccupied by *Curculio bimaculatus* Fabricius, 1787, Mant. Insectorum, Vol. 1, p. 98.
- 1813 *Rhynchaenus pollux* Gyllenhal, Ins. Suecica, Vol. 1, Part 3, p. 96, preoccupied by *Rhynchaenus pollux* Fabricius, 1801, Syst. Eleuth., Vol. 2, p. 457.
- 1813 *Rhynchaenus posticus* Gyllenhal, Ins. Suecica, Vol. 1, Part 3, p. 113.

All specific names for the alfalfa weevil published before *Rhynchaenus posticus* Gyllenhal, 1813, are preoccupied and are rendered permanently unavailable. Therefore, the valid scientific name of the alfalfa weevil, following the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, is *Hypera postica* (Gyllenhal).



AVE ATQUE VALE

ROBERT EVANS SNODGRASS

1875—1962